



The D.C. Council voted Tuesday in favor of a bill to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use.

Mayor Gray is expected to sign the bill into law. Then it will have to wait for the standard congressional review period before going into effect. Congress has rarely used its veto powers over D.C. laws.

The vote was little more than a formality. The council had already approved decriminalization by an 11-to-1 vote. But before that initial vote, the council watered down the bill by maintaining criminal penalties for smoking pot in public.

Mayor Vincent Gray and Police Chief Cathy Lanier supported maintaining criminal penalties for public smoking.

If the bill becomes law, the district would join the 17 states that have some form of decriminalization.

Councilmember Tommy Wells, the bill's lead sponsor, said the district will have one of the nation's strongest decriminalization policies because the civil fine for possession will be just \$25. However, he is concerned that racial disparities will persist among those arrested for smoking.

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